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# THE CENTRE OF UNITY.

*Pamphlet Box B4 J.J.S.*

"THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND THE CENTRE OF UNITY,"

BY REV. DYSON HAGUE, M. A.,

## REVIEWED

BY

REV. WM. RYAN,

PRESIDENT OF THE NOVA SCOTIA CONFERENCE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE publication of the following *critique*, in pamphlet form, does not originate in any desire for polemical warfare. It appeared in the WESLEYAN of Dec. 15th, in reply to Mr. Hague's Essay, and a strong wish has been expressed for an edition suited for general distribution.

WESLEYAN OFFICE,  
Dec. 16, 1892.

I have always believed with Paul that Christ broke down the middle wall of partition, not only between God and man, but also between man and man, and that He is the *centre of unity* to all people of all nations and all creeds, and that to all Protestants the Bible must be the source of all religious formularies, rites and doctrines. That whenever we depart from this, we enter upon papal territory and exalt a human production above the inspired word, and that if ever there comes a time when the different Protestant Churches shall have visible organic union, it will be when they recognise the Lord Jesus Christ as the *one centre of unity* and the Bible as the source of all religious formularies and doctrines and creeds. But in November 1892, while passing through the City of Halifax in a street car, a friend put into my hand a new light entitled "The Church of England the Centre of Unity, by the Rev. Dyson Hague, M. A., Rector of St. Paul's Church, Halifax, N. S." This pamphlet of eighty-six pages is professedly a contribution to the CAUSE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY, but it is really a wedge making union impossible with any branch of the Church indorsing its assumptions and errors. It is written in a more Christian and less arrogant spirit than some similar works emanating from Episcopal clergymen, but the author evidently holds the same absorption idea of his brethren. In his judgment the Church of England, like Aaron's rod, must swallow up all the other

Churches. With Mr. Hague's faith, we have nothing to do. He has a perfect right to believe his own Church the centre of unity and the purest and best of all the Churches. Neither have we a word to say about his method of preparing his brethren to receive the other Churches into the bosom of the Church of England. That is a matter for him and his brethren to settle. But I take issue with Mr. Hague on three points viz: *God's intention respecting the Church of England, the testimony of other Churches respecting the Church of England, and the character of a New Testament Church.* It is with great reluctance we do this. The pamphlet is being circulated among our people and we must either meet and expose its errors, or by our silence tacitly indorse them. We respect the Episcopal people, and we are trying hard to respect their clergymen as men of truth and God, and if we succeed they must help us by ceasing to make irritating assumptions and representations which have no basis but in their imagination. First then

### God's intention respecting the Church of England.

Here is the first sentence of the pamphlet: "The Church of England was intended by God to be the Church of the English-speaking people of the world." If that is true, every English-speaking man who leaves the Church of England or refuses to become a member of her is thwarting the *intention of God.* May I ask Mr. Hague how he came in

possession of a knowledge of God's intention in relation to the Church of England which enables him to speak so dogmatically? There are two ways in which we may know God's intention. First by divine revelation and secondly by divine work, which is the outcome of divine intention. As it will be admitted that there is no divine revelation on this matter, we must look to the Church for the proof of this unqualified assumption. As admitted in the pamphlet, the Church of England has had the grandest opportunity ever given any Protestant Church to take this world for Christ. She has had the wealth of the English nation at her back, an annual revenue of more than fifteen millions of dollars. Archbishops and bishops with salaries ranging from seventy-five thousand to ten thousand dollars and thousands of high-salaried rectors. Then she has had some of the most saintly characters and best scholars the world has ever seen. With all those advantages, she is not to-day the Church of one-quarter of the English-speaking people. If you say that God intended her to be the Church of the English-speaking people of the world, and that with all those stupendous advantages He failed to make her measure up to one-quarter of the divine purpose, what kind of a Being do you make God? From the failure of the Church of England as acknowledged in this pamphlet, I draw the conclusion that it never was the intention of God that she should be the Church of the English-speaking people of the world. It might be said with a good deal more show of reason that God intends that the Methodist Church shall be the Church of the English-speaking people of the world. Look at the grand successes which God has given her. In one century she has grown from a few thousands to thirty millions of souls. Still we would be very sorry to make any such invidious assumption.

#### **The testimony of other Churches respecting the Church of England.**

The author of this pamphlet teaches that all Protestant bodies concur with him in recognising the Church of England as the one centre of Christian unity. He says, "She is admittedly the only Church to which all look as the rallying centre of unity for the

bodies outside of the erring Roman Church." "There is but one Church in the opinion of the great body of thoughtful Christians which seemingly is able to become the rallying point for unity, and make union possible on scriptural, apostolic and primitive lines. That body is the Church of England. As the great religious bodies stand to-day with the one burning question of unity before them, the Church of England, outsiders themselves being the testifiers, receives the great majority of votes as the one candidate that has any chance of success." Who are the "all" and "the great religious bodies" and the "outsiders" who testify to their faith in the Church of England as the centre of Christian unity? I hesitate not to pronounce this an error calculated to deceive the people by making them believe that all Christian denominations are looking to the Church of England as their future home. It is not true. There are isolated men in almost any church who would indorse almost anything called union; but not one man in every thousand in the Presbyterian or Baptist or Methodist Church of this Dominion would think of recognizing the Church of England as the centre of unity. Has either of those churches in its official or collective capacity ever said anything similar to what Mr. Hague makes them say? If not why not wait for their deliverance? Is it Christian, is it honest, to take the *ipse dixit* of some extempore speaker and use it as if it was the testimony of Synods and Associations and Conferences? Of course it answers a purpose. It makes the uninformed believe that all protestant churches are impatiently waiting union with the Church of England, and that they had better enter that church now and be there to welcome their erring brethren when they return. We deeply regret to have to say that as "outsiders" see the Church of England to day she is so far from appearing a centre of unity that she looks like a centre of *discord* and *dissension*. High churchmen confronting Low churchmen and Broad churchmen antagonizing both and all quarreling about material crosses and attitudes and priestly robes and genuflections. Mr. Hague tells us in this pamphlet of no less than six "schools" in the Church of England viz Low and Hig

and Broad and Narrow, Evangelical and Catholic churchmen, each like the Grecians of old contending for the mastery. Yet this heterogeneous mass is called the centre of unity. If there is any unity here, it must be like the point of rest said to be in the whirlwind realized only by those who are in the circle of the storm. "Outsiders" cannot know it and therefore protest against being made to say they do. Into this little church ship, manned by six different crews, each claiming the helm, *thirty millions* of Methodists are invited to take passage and millions more of Presbyterians and Baptists. Brethren we are not coming ! We love you and with all our hearts wish you a most prosperous voyage and pray that you may reach the haven of glory without mutiny on board. But our faith in your ship is weak and we dare not go with you.

What has created all those different "schools" in the Church of England of which this pamphlet speaks ? Her standards of *faith and practice*. Some believe she teaches *ritualism* and others assert that she teaches *evangelism*, while others ignore the word protestant and open the Roman confessional in their churches ; and the contention increases until we see a mighty centrifugal force scattering the people in all directions. In the midst of the dissensions the pious Rector of St. Paul's cries to the protestant churches, "Brethren do not let your senses deceive you. Remember human faculties are not always to be trusted. This is not a centrifugal force as you imagine. *But this is "The centre of Christian Unity!"*

#### The Character of a New Testament Church.

In this pamphlet the claim for the Church of England to be the centre of Christian unity is based on her apostolic and scriptural character, (*See pages 4 and 5.*) Still the author fails to give us any idea of what he understands by the Church of England. In trying to account for her failure to take the position which in his judgment God intended her to fill he says : "As churchmen we know with pride the cause lies not in our Church. We dare not, we must not, we cannot blame our Church." "Like Caesar's wife she stands above suspicion. She is pure, she is true, she is

faithful, her hands are clean. Her formularies are as sound, her standards as lofty, as sanctified as Spirit-guided hands could make them. We must expose the true offenders, and those really guilty must confess that they are the sinners. *We the clergy and we the people of the Church of England are to blame.*" The italics are Mr Hague's. Elsewhere he shows that all churchmen of all schools are guilty : but this thing which he calls the Church and tries to make the centre of Christian unity is pure. Here then is a clear line of distinction drawn between the Church and the clergy and people of the Church. One is "pure and true and faithful." The other is guilty and must confess. If the clergy and the people are not the Church of England in what does she consist ? Must we receive Burril's definition of her, namely, "An institution established by the law of the land in reference to religion ?" Then we have no Church of England in Canada. Do the Rubric and prayer book and formularies and church paraphernalia constitute the Church of England ? Then she is a dead, inanimate thing. But this cannot be Mr. Hague's idea because he applies the words she and her to the Church and in point of moral purity compares her to Caesar's wife. Before we read this pamphlet we thought we knew about what constituted the Church of England. Since reading it we are convinced that if we know the author of the pamphlet does not know ; and as we would not dare to assume that the Rector of St. Paul's is ignorant of the character of his own church, we wait further revelations from this new light that has come to show us the centre of christian unity. But while Mr. Hague has not told us what the Church of England is, he has told us what she is not. *She is not the clergy and the people;* and my point is this that since the Church of England is something distinct from the people, something that is "pure" while the people are sinful, that is true while the people are false, *she cannot possibly be a New Testament Church.* Every where in the New Testament the people only are recognized as the Church of Christ. When Paul sends greetings to the Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila surely he sends his mes-

sage not to the prayer book, but to the men and women worshipping in that house. When Christ tells the Sardis church that she is dead and calls upon her to repent, and the Philadelphia church that He will prosper her because she has kept the work of His patience, and the Laodicean church that He will spue her out of his mouth for her lukewarmness, He speaks to living accountable men and women. If all the ministers and members of a church can sin now and their church remain pure, it was not so in apostolic times. Christ said to his disciples who were the nucleus of His church, "Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world. The kingdom of God is within you." An apostolic Church is a society of Christ-like men and women and their households who hold the doctrines and ordinances of the New Testament in their entirety and preach them in their purity unmixed either with papal superstition or modern religious quackery, and who insist upon nothing as essential to the salvation of the human soul but what God's word demands. Such a society is a true and "*regular*" apostolic Church, whether it traces its origin back one hundred years or ten thousand years. Dr. Arnold says, "The true and grand idea of a Church is a society for making men like Christ, earth like heaven, the kingdoms of this world the kingdom of Christ." The Church of England, then according to Mr. Hague, not being composed of men and women, lacks the first and great essential to a New Testament Church. Again, is it true that the formularies and standards of the Church of England are "pure and clean"? Is it not true that the Prayer-Book is a *compromise* between Protestantism and popery which honest men may embrace and interpret in different ways and one become a Protestant and another a Papist? If not how account for the fact that hundreds who swear fealty at her altars and pledge themselves "to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word," get so far apart in their teaching and practices? Look at the controversy going on just now between the Bishop of Quebec and the Rev. W. T. Noble, Rector of the Trinity Church, Quebec. Mr. Noble is a staunch Protestant, a true son of the Church of Eng-

land, and must have the sympathy of Mr. Hague and every true Protestant in the trying position in which his Romanizing Bishop and brother clergymen have forced him. Here is one of Mr. Noble's letters addressed to his Bishop and published in the *Montreal Witness* on the 20th. Nov. 1892: and in which he describes the Romanizing practices in which the Bishop of Quebec and his clergy indulge.

#### Romanizing Practices.

*From the Rev. Mr. Noble to the Bishop of Quebec:*

MY LORD BISHOP,—There is no man in Quebec who more ardently desires peace and harmonious co-operation in Church work than I do, and hence the inexpressible pain with which I was driven last Tuesday to the conclusion that such harmonious co-operation is impossible. I went to the reception on Monday night, and to the consecration service on Tuesday morning, with the honest desire to manifest and cultivate friendly feelings all round. But when I listened to the false and malignant anti-Protestant calumnies uttered in the pulpit of Archdeacon Roe—an insult to the memory of the dead, and an outrage on the feelings of the living—and witnessed the mass-mongering performance at the Lord's table, by which I was prevented from partaking of the Lord's Supper, all hope of united action died within me.

I have been born and bred in the United Church of England and Ireland, but never before did I witness such a travesty of the simple, solemn communion service of our Church. If I believe that such a performance was an honest exposition of the doctrine and practice of our Church, I would not remain twenty-four hours either a minister or a member of the Church of England. But I know—and every honest student of history knows—that it was a dishonest attempt to introduce the Romish mass into the Church of England. Dishonest because our Church, in Article xxxi., calls it a "blasphemous fable, and a dangerous deceit," and those now trying to introduce it have given their assent and consent to this statement, and have solemnly promised "to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word."

What meant that strange exhibition of rudeness—five clergymen, with their backs turned on the congregation, and their faces to the east? Is it a repetition of what Ezekiel saw in the temple at Jerusalem: Five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east," Ezek viii. 16? If so the greater

abomination has come in, and the end is near at hand. Again, what means the vulgar practice of rinsing the cups, and drinking the slops? Why is less decency observed at the Lord's table than at your own, or at that of your host? Or is this vulgarity born of the gross materialism of transubstantiation? Remember, our Lord told the Pharisees, that "laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do," Mark vii. 8. Again, what mean the adorations, invocations, and elevations, unauthorized by the Book of Common Prayer? These are essentially Romish, and as such were rejected at the Reformation. Further, you added a service after washing the cups for which you have no authority. Where will this retrograde nonconformity end? My Lord Bishop, I cannot express the pain and discouragement these things have caused me, or the pain it has cost me to write this letter. However, if war there must be, on you—who have thrown down the guage—must rest the responsibility for all that follows. But in God's name, I take it up, and shall appeal to the people against the Romanizing practices of the chief shepherd. I am bound by my ordination vows, and constrained by convictions stronger than death, to adopt this course. To remain in the Church, and wink at these things, is impossible to me; and to abandon the Church of my fathers would be equally painful. Such is the dilemma in which you have placed me, and such is your responsibility.

Your obedient servant,

W. T. NOBLE.

Nov. 1892.

That such practices as Mr. Noble describes and others equally Anti-Protestant, in connection with the Church of England, are not confined to the bishops and clergy of Quebec, we all with sorrow know. Now my contention is this, viz., if Mr. Hague be correct and the prayerbook and formularies are clear, scriptural, Protestant exhibitions of Bible doctrine, then those bishops and clergymen in the Church of England who indulge in Romanising practices are *deficient in either intellect or conscience*. If the standards are all right and they have sufficient intellectual acumen to be teachers of the people, they must understand the truth which they pledge themselves to teach. Then if they break their vows by such practices as those described by Mr. Noble, what are they but *religious knaves*? On the other hand, if the Church

standards are all right and they fail to see and understand the truth which they solemnly pledge themselves to teach, what are they but *religious imbeciles*? This is the dilemma in which we are found to-day, viz., *the standards and formularies of the Church of England are Anti-Protestant and misleading in their teaching or many of her bishops and clergy are religious knaves or imbeciles*. There is no getting away from this conclusion. Our reason, our logic, our common sense force us to it. Mr. Hague takes the position that the Church is Protestant and faultlessly scriptural in her teaching, and consequently that all those bishops and clergymen who are fast burying her Protestantism and carrying her to Rome are either conscienceless knaves or intellectual imbeciles. We dare not take that position. We believe those men have a conscience and that some of them have intellectual power. Hence we are forced to believe that the Church of England is misleading in her teaching and practices. While she claims to be Protestant in character, her formularies are so expressed and her practice so shaped that many of her people are led to believe in and practice some of the worst superstitions of popery. We claim that until the prayer-book is revised and made to harmonize with Bible teaching, it is dangerous for any one who desires to be true to God and Protestantism to become a member of the Church of England. He may have a Protestant pastor for the present and be well cared for, but who can tell how soon he may have a pastor like the Bishop of Quebec who will wade into all the mummeries of Romanism? When Mr. Hague and his brethren in the Church of England recognize the *Lord Jesus Christ as the only centre of Christian unity and the Bible as the only centre of doctrinal union*, they will have a basis upon which to stand in laboring for visible union among the different Churches of Protestantism. Then the Rector of St. Paul's will come with his prayerbook, and the Presbyterian with his confession of faith, and the Methodist with his discipline, and the Baptist with his baptismal formulary, and, each holding his creed in his left hand and grasping the inspired Bible in his right hand, together they will stand before the only centre of Christian

unity, and looking up to Him will say : "Lord Jesus we recognize Thee as the One true Vine of which we are branches." Then shall we see the visible tokens of that spiritual union which now subsists among all Christians of every name who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth and for which the Saviour prayed when He said : "That they all may be one as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The Lord speed the day !

In the mean time may we ask the Brethren of the Church of England not to misrepresent

sent us "outsiders" by trying to make it appear that we prefer the Church of England to our own Churches ? For really it is not true. Either the Prayer Book or a large number of the Bishops and clergymen must be reformed and made over before ever we can see one of our friends become a member of her without fears that Rome may be his destination. The Bible for us and our children and a barred door to popery and all papistical trappings and practices.

WILLIAM RYAN.

Burlington, N. S. Dec. 8th, 1892.